

# **Lexington City Council Vision 2026**

**From Council Discussion on March 10, 2011**

**Revised 4/19/11**

Lexington has been called the “most beautiful city in Virginia.” Our residents agree. The beauty they cherish is more than that of two colleges nestled in the hills, tree-lined streets, varied architecture reminiscent of a quaint village that has grown and adapted over the centuries, and vistas to the surrounding mountains. It is, as well, the smiles they encounter on the sidewalks, the vibrancy of a small city with the values of a small town, the bustle of business areas, a thriving economic climate that generates good employment, and the independence of thought that finds creative expression in the arts and music and literature. It is an appreciation of a rich past with a commitment to an even better future and persistence in pursuing the well-being of our community and of all our people.

Lexington is a city for living, loving, learning, lingering, growing, remembering, and adapting. Here is why:

## **LIVING**

*(that which is necessary for us to live here)*

Lexington is a pleasant and rewarding place to live. Our downtown hotels and enterprises ensure a lively historic district, supplemented by thriving commercial and shopping areas offering a wide range of products and services. Placed at one end of what was called “the breadbasket of Virginia,” Lexingtonians take advantage of a diverse food industry that provides home-grown meats and produce, cheeses, chocolates and coffees, many available at our farmers’ markets. They may “buy local” and also “grow local,” in personal and community gardens sustained by nurseries and garden organizations.

Located at the junction of two interstate highways with a public transportation system linking Lexington with Buena Vista and other cities, economic opportunities abound for those who work and reside here while enabling the many visitors, alumni, and parents to sustain our significant tourism industry. Our up-to-date regional broadband technology nurtures businesses, large and small, and provides work-from-home opportunities for professionals who long to escape metropolitan areas for our bucolic region, and jobs for those who grew up in our area and want to remain. Our City government partners with private enterprise to encourage continual economic growth. Through a strong sense of regional cooperation, Lexington shares in and benefits from a favorable area-wide climate for business.

### **LIVING Priorities:**

1. Create jobs and build a stronger economic base in our region via the Economic Plan:

- Develop an aggressive program to attract business to the area
- Develop public private partnerships that appeal to enterprises

- Work with our partners (i.e. Buena Vista, County) to bring additional jobs to the region
- Bring 10 new businesses to the Rockbridge area using a business model based on regional cooperation

2. Strengthen the retail base of our downtown

- Create a downtown business district
- Monitor specific measures of success (i.e. Every storefront in downtown occupied; retail on first floor)

3. Enhance the buy local/grow local campaign through joint efforts with the Chamber and ordinances where needed

4. Evaluate the Maury Express to determine its success and the viability of enhancing transportation options:

- Explore a public connection with Roanoke and Harrisonburg
- Expand public transportation to Raphine, Fairfield, Goshen, and Glasgow
- Return commercial bus service to Lexington

5. Complete phase 1 broadband backbone and electronics installation and support Phase 2 (RANA)

## **LOVING**

*(that which makes us passionate about living here)*

People love to live in Lexington. They stroll along interesting streets or over the scenic Chessie and Woods Creek Trails, or explore Lexington's heritage by way of historic walking paths. They patronize well-kept stores, admire the latest exhibitions in galleries and museums, or take in a Rockbridge Rapids baseball game or athletic event sponsored by Washington and Lee University, Virginia Military Institute, or the Rockbridge Area Recreational Organization. Everywhere, they offer a friendly smile and a welcoming attitude for neighbor or visitor, citizen, or student alike. Residents of all ages can safely walk and bike to school and work, and indeed they constitute the highest percentage of pedestrian commuters in the state. Lexingtonians cherish their beautiful natural surroundings and remain constantly committed to maintain them to the highest standards. They collaborate well with each other in promoting mutual wellbeing through community-based organizations and in efforts to support those who are in need. Citizens freely express their opinions on civic matters with candor but also with respect for the diversity that defines our City.

### **LOVING Priorities:**

1. Develop and implement a phased approach to create biking lanes and related facilities:

- Create bike lanes along Main Street and/or Nelson within City limits
- Locate and sign bike parking

- Install downtown bike racks
  - Enhance safe walking paths to city schools for all children to encourage walking
2. Require “well kept” stores to ensure a downtown that is attractive and safe
  3. Complete the connection of the Woods Creek Trail with the Chessie Trail across the Maury River
  4. Create a system of walking trails around such themes as history and nature

## **LEARNING**

*(that which prepares us, broadens us, and deepens us)*

Lexington is particularly well endowed with ways to pursue learning. Our youngest have the opportunity to engage in early childhood preparation for cultural, social, and academic achievement. The City of Lexington operates a K-8 school system honored for its excellence and our children learn in modern facilities where they are inspired by competent and enthusiastic staff. They progress seamlessly into a challenging and diverse County high school in which Lexington is an active partner. Our high school graduates proceed to higher education opportunities that range from Ivy League and Virginia’s university or community college system to vocational programs, all fitting individual needs. Lifetime learning opportunities are readily available to satisfy interests of every sort, and to meet ongoing needs through continuing education and affordable access to resources which modern technology extends beyond geographic limitation. Our regional library, together with those of Washington and Lee and the Virginia Military Institute, provide extraordinary resources. As well, these two nationally recognized and financially strong institutions of higher education understand the symbiotic relationship with the community. They contribute to its vitality, providing facilities, resources, and professional expertise.

### **LEARNING Priorities:**

1. Aggressively develop an effective partnership with Rockbridge County:
  - Obtain representation (i.e. a voting membership) on county School Board in matters that pertain to RCHS
  - Work with Rockbridge County Schools to choose high quality administrators at RCHS
  - Address specific issues that affect the quality of education at RCHS (drop out rate)
2. Develop the financial plan for building the new Waddell Elementary School
3. Plan a Pre-K classroom in our public schools staffed with reasonably paid staff to ensure that those who cannot afford private school can start on an even playing field
4. Support our regional library and other entities that foster learning

## **LINGERING** *(that which allows us to remain here healthily and safely)*

Once here, by birth or transplanting, most Lexingtonians hope to remain here for life. The City strives to provide a safe, healthy environment that allows them to do so. Our police, fire, and emergency services are recognized for their responsiveness, competence, care and concern for residents, visitors, and students. Our hospital provides first-rate primary care thanks to a state-of-the-art medical facility staffed by highly skilled professionals, with access as well to world-class specialists both in Lexington and in nearby hospitals. Lexington offers a wide variety of housing that varies in style, type, and affordability, all in vibrant and safe neighborhoods. Families find options for affordable childcare that is developmentally appropriate and provided by well-paid and dedicated staff. The environment itself invigorates and sustains healthy living, not only through a four-season climate but also from successful efforts to provide the freshest food, clean air and pure water.

### **LINGERING Priorities:**

1. Explore, develop, and implement strategies to improve medical care in the City and region (with appropriate partners) so that we:

- Upgrade our hospital to make it the hospital of first choice for primary care
- Investigate the re-opening of the birthing center
- Work with the medical community to insure good prenatal care

2. Plan to move to hire paid fire/rescue personnel and present for Council's consideration, along with strategies that will achieve:

- Merge fire and rescue squads into an effective working team
- Enactment of a regional fire/rescue agreement with standard volunteer treatment
- Development an effective regional fire/rescue service among Buena Vista, Lexington, and Rockbridge County

3. Ensure desirable home ownership (i.e. discourage poorly maintained housing) and prevent homelessness, to include strategies such as:

- Encourage real estate investors to seek/support housing for families who may want to stay in Lexington
- Facilitate conversion of rental property to family ownership
- Build houses on Thompson Knoll
- Sell the two Threshold houses

4. Ensure water that meets state and federal standards

5. Financially support full day care through Yellow Brick Road

**GROWING**  
*(that which inspires us, expands us,  
challenges us, and invigorates us)*

One reason Lexingtonians enjoy long lives is that they are constantly growing. Our Y, our City pool (indoor and out,) parks, and trails make recreational opportunities available for adults and children alike. Because a river runs through it, our area invites water sports including kayaking, tubing, fishing, and swimming, notably at Jordan's Point. Public parks strategically placed around the City encourage recreation and sports, and a teen center provides an enjoyable refuge for the young. Not only the body but also the mind may receive constant invigoration. Virginia Military Institute and Washington and Lee University open events, classes, seminars, concerts, lectures, exhibits, and museums to all in the community. In addition, hosts of local organizations, societies, galleries, dance and art studios, and private teachers ensure a vibrant cultural life. Festivals and shows, parks for people and dogs, art openings, public concerts and smaller jam sessions bring citizens, neighbors, friends, and visitors to the City to enjoy these events, and the many restaurants provide a wide range of food and drink. Our churches nurture spiritual growth and worship, personal fellowship, and leadership in the community. Lexington is a place to grow.

**GROWING Priorities:**

1. Support recreation opportunities for adults as well as for children.
  - Collaborate with RCHS, Rockbridge Area Tennis Association, and County in building more tennis courts at RCHS
2. Create a teen center to enhance youth activities
3. Create a dog park
4. Expand recreational opportunities at Jordan's Point:
  - Partial removal of the dam to create a natural water park

**REMEMBERING**  
*(that which gives us a foundation from the past  
and a context for the future)*

Lexington cherishes its past. Our people treasure the legends and characters that have inhabited our City, not only famed generals of the Civil War and World War II but also our Scots-Irish founders, the professors and students at our schools, the rich culture of our African-American community, the legacy of individuals named and unnamed who have shaped what we have become. Our sense of tradition and our historical institutions and schools, homes, churches, buildings, and sites evoke a love of our collective heritage. We strive to protect our unique environment through careful stewardship of our buildings and vistas and by expecting high

standards of aesthetics and historic preservation. Grounded in its history, Lexington celebrates our mutual respect for the past while looking to the future.

### **REMEMBERING Priorities:**

1. Develop a flag and banner policy
2. Find or create a grant program to enhance historic preservation of downtown buildings/facilities, including an incentive program for downtown façade improvements
3. Bury utility lines on Randolph Street
4. With partners, explore options to achieve successes that promote/achieve these values:
  - Capitalize on Sesquicentennial enthusiasm and ensure that those observances are unifying rather than divisive
  - Cherish our past beyond the Civil War
  - Protect historic buildings throughout the city
  - Enhance appreciation of African American history by including it in carriage rides and downtown walking tour narratives
  - Establish a weekly news column or blog that celebrates a local African American

### **ADAPTING**

*(that which launches us successfully into the future)*

Past, however, is prologue. Our heritage provides a strong foundation on which to adapt and build for the future, and that is our commitment. As a City, we seek to promote the careful use of all our resources through energy efficiency, reducing our waste, recycling and composting, and adapting old buildings for modern use - all part of our dedication to environmental harmony. We welcome all comers through improved entryways into town, upgrading the various commercial areas of our city, and infill development of vacant sites, guided by the best principles of new urbanism that also guard appropriate open spaces.

As a community, we strive to lower barriers that inhibit our residents, whether they be physical impediments to the handicapped or the more subtle divisions of race or social class, in order to further the greatest possible interaction within our community. To that end, we actively welcome new participants in all our endeavors, whether in organizations, churches, activities, or government.

Our government strives to be efficient and effective, responsive to citizens, respectful in the use of their tax dollars, and alert to worthy developments in technology. As a result, young families and retirees alike choose to live in Lexington, motivated by its reputation for successful regional collaboration, adaptive re-use of resources, and a delicate balance between technological innovation and personal service. They are amazed that the community, with deference to its past, charges confidently and nimbly into the future.

### **ADAPTING Priorities:**

1. Increase dramatically recycling in the City of Lexington through specific initiatives such as:

- Educate citizens
- Expand the program (e.g. Change collection to pick up compostables, as well as recyclables and other waste)
- Set specific goals, e.g., achieve 60% recycling rate

2. Complete renovation of City Hall

3. Implement energy efficiency measures in all City buildings

4. Evaluate options that will ensure development and progress in specific locations:

- Improve physical and economic attractiveness of entryways, especially South and East
- Implement infill on East Lexington corridor and plan for infill at Jefferson Street parking lot
- Ensure accessibility to **all** residents and visitors to our downtown, parks, and programs

5. Open the R.E. Lee Hotel

6. Upgrade the City website and implement social network participation, e.g., Facebook page and strategies that will more actively involve citizens in City affairs and improve communications between government and residents

7. Assess the issues related to narrow streets that currently inhibit the passage of fire and EMS equipment

8. Continue town hall meetings to promote citizen engagement

9. Re-use the Rescue Squad Building, including full consideration of RARA's use of the building